

As I said in my opening remarks, we have always paid our bills on time. If you don't do it, really bad things happen to all Americans. So let's get that done, and then let's have our conversation about budget priorities.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Senator from Texas.

CHINA

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I rise today to speak about a gross miscarriage of justice—the imprisonment of Mark Swidan by the Government of China and the Chinese Communist Party.

Mark is from Luling, a small city in my home State of Texas. His mother, Ms. Katherine Swidan, still lives in Luling, while Mark eventually became a resident of Houston, my hometown. For over 10 years, Katherine has been waging a desperate battle to see her son again.

In 2012, Mark traveled to China on a business trip, which turned into a nightmare. On November 13, 2012, Mark was abducted by China's Public Security Bureau while he was taking his family back home. A witness to the abduction has said that Mark was detained because Chinese officials wanted to view the contents of his cell phone.

Mark was accused of being a part of a criminal conspiracy with 11 other individuals to manufacture and traffic drugs—charges that Mark has denied and which have been debunked over and over again.

Chinese authorities tried to coerce Mark into confessing. He refused, and he pleaded not guilty in a trial that occurred in November 2013. During the trial, the prosecution didn't produce any forensic evidence to back up their allegations, and no drugs were found on Mark or in his hotel room. Records in Mark's passport showed that he wasn't even in China during the time of the alleged offenses, and the 11 other individuals indicted in relation to this alleged drug conspiracy couldn't identify Mark. Nevertheless, outrageously, in 2019, a Chinese court sentenced Mark to death.

Mark remains unjustly detained today. He is suffering in a Chinese prison right now, as we speak. In prison, Mark has been kept in deplorable, abusive conditions. His jailers seek to break his will and break his faith. They have confiscated his Bible and his rosary. Mark's cell exposes him to extreme heat and extreme cold. He is deprived of sleep and subjected to physical abuse. He is in danger of high blood pressure, skin infections, and asthma. He has lost more than 100 pounds. His health is dire. Throughout all of this, Mark has been denied access to his family and access to American diplomats.

Mark has communicated with his mother, and his mother has told me and told the world that the Chinese communist government has failed to

break Mark's faith, which remains strong.

I spoke with Mark's mother earlier this week. This is a mom whose heart is breaking. This is a mom who wants to see her son again. This is a mom who wants to hold and hug and care for the son she loves.

The treatment of Mark has been atrocious, so much so that even the United Nations has called on China to release him. The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention—a U.N. group of human rights experts who investigate cases of arbitrary detention around the world—found that Mark is being held in violation of customary international law and international norms, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The world can see that the Chinese Communist Party is trying to use hostages and hostage taking as a tool of statecraft. The Chinese Communist Party says they want to be taken seriously as a great power and a great nation, and they say they want to be respected on the global stage. But their treatment of Mark is not how great nations and great powers behave; their treatment of Mark is how third-world despots act.

I have drafted and this week introduced a resolution calling on the Chinese Government and the Chinese Communist Party to immediately release Mark. I am joined by my colleague from Texas, Senator CORNYN, and by Representative CLOUD from Texas in the House, who has introduced the same resolution in the House of Representatives. This resolution not only calls for Mark's immediate release, it also condemns China for withholding from Mark access to his family and to proper medical care.

Furthermore, it calls on the Biden administration to prioritize efforts to secure Mark's release, both in their conversations with Chinese diplomats and in international forums. In a few days, Secretary of State Blinken will be in Beijing, and he will have an opportunity to finish the final chapter of this tragedy. I am calling on the Biden administration to use all of the tools at our disposal to secure Mark's release, and I am calling on the Government of China to finally release Mark.

This ordeal has to end. It has to end for Mark. It has to end for his mother. It has to end for his family. We must and will do more so that Mark can come home.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). The Senator from Nevada.

AMENDING THE CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES ACT TO FIX A TECHNICAL ERROR IN THE DEFINITIONS

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 223, introduced earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows: A bill (S. 223) to amend the Controlled Substances Act to fix a technical error in the definitions.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 223) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 223

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES ACT.

Section 102 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 802) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (58) as paragraph (59);

(2) by redesignating the second paragraph designated as paragraph (57) (relating to the definition of "serious drug felony") as paragraph (58); and

(3) by moving paragraphs (57), (58) (as so redesignated), and (59) (as so redesignated) 2 ems to the left.

NATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE WEEK

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration and the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 11.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 11) designating the week of January 22 through January 28, 2023, as "National School Choice Week".

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 11) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of January 23, 2023, under "Submitted Resolutions.")

CONGRATULATING THE SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY JACK-RABBITS ON WINNING THE 2023 NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION DIVISION I FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP SUBDIVISION TITLE

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 22, submitted earlier today.